



Better Nights Equal Better Days

Although most of us know that proper diet and regular exercise are important for maintaining a healthy

lifestyle, many underestimate the value of sleep. Adults need between seven and eight hours of sleep each night, although individual needs may range from five to ten hours. **When you go to sleep, your body goes to work:**

- **Consolidating the day's learning into memory and improving your ability to absorb and remember everyday skills; and**
- **Re-energizing you to prepare for the day ahead by preventing stress and decreased productivity.**

Depriving yourself of a good night's sleep night after night can cause the accumulation of a "sleep debt. Look for everyday lifestyle clues to determine whether you need to catch up on sleep. The only way to reduce this debt is to get the amount of sleep your body needs. The following tips will help you get the sleep you need:

- **Give yourself "permission" to go to bed.** Although it may be hard to put your "to do" list away, make sleep a priority. The results will be obvious in the morning.
- **Unwind early in the evening.** Try to deal with worries and distractions several hours before bedtime.
- **Develop a sleep ritual.** Doing the same things every night just before bed signals your body to settle down for the night.

- **Keep regular hours.** Keep your biological clock in check by going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time each morning — even on weekends.
- **Create a restful place to sleep.** Sleep in a cool, dark room that is free from noises that may disturb your rest.
- **Sleep on a comfortable, supportive mattress and foundation.** It's more difficult to sleep on a bed that's too small, too soft, too hard, or too old.
- **Exercise regularly.** Regular exercise can help relieve daily stress and tension, but don't exercise too close to bedtime or you may have trouble falling asleep.
- **Cut down on stimulates.** Consuming stimulates, such as caffeine, in the evening can make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- **Don't smoke.** Smokers take longer to fall asleep and wake up more frequently during the night.
- **Reduce alcohol intake.** Drinking alcohol shortly before bedtime interrupts and fragments sleep.

Consult a medical professional if you think you may be suffering from a serious sleep problem.

For general questions about sleep disorders, consumer information is available from the National Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org)